

§ 778.331

was not paid to the employee for employment, or that it is not a thing of value which is part of wages.

§ 778.331 Awards for performance on the job.

Where a prize is awarded for the quality, quantity or efficiency of work done by the employee during his customary working hours at his normal assigned tasks (whether on the employer's premises or elsewhere) it is obviously paid as additional remuneration for employment. Thus prizes paid for co-operation, courtesy, efficiency, highest production, best attendance, best quality of work, greatest number of overtime hours worked, etc., are part of the regular rate of pay. If the prize is paid in cash, the amount paid must be allocated (for the method of allocation see § 778.209) over the period during which it was earned to determine the resultant increase in the average hourly rate for each week of the period. If the prize is merchandise, the cost to the employer is the sum which must be allocated. Where the prize is either cash or merchandise, with the choice left the employee, the amount to be allocated is the amount (or the cost) of the actual prize he accepts.

§ 778.332 Awards for activities not normally part of employee's job.

(a) Where the prize is awarded for activities outside the customary working hours of the employee, beyond the scope of his customary duties or away from the employer's premises, the question of whether the compensation is remuneration for employment will depend on such factors as the amount of time, if any, spent by the employee in competing, the relationship between the contest activities and the usual work of the employee, whether the competition involves work usually performed by other employees for employers, whether an employee is specifically urged to participate or led to believe that he will not merit promotion or advancement unless he participates.

(b) By way of example, a prize paid for work performed in obtaining new business for an employer would be regarded as remuneration for employment. Although the duties of the employees who participate in the contest

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may not normally encompass this type of work, it is work of a kind normally performed by salesmen for their employers, and the time spent by the employee in competing for such a prize (whether successfully or not) is working time and must be counted as such in determining overtime compensation due under the Act. On the other hand a prize or bonus paid to an employee when a sale is made by the company's sales representative to a person whom he recommended as a good sales prospect would not be regarded as compensation for services if in fact the prize-winner performed no work in securing the name of the sales prospect and spent no time on the matter for the company in any way.

§ 778.333 Suggestion system awards.

The question has been raised whether awards made to employees for suggestions submitted under a suggestion system plan are to be regarded as part of the regular rate. There is no hard and fast rule on this point as the term "suggestion system" has been used to describe a variety of widely differing plans. It may be generally stated, however, that prizes paid pursuant to a bona fide suggestion system plan may be excluded from the regular rate at least in situations where it is the fact that:

(a) The amount of the prize has no relation to the earnings of the employee at his job but is rather geared to the value to the company of the suggestion which is submitted; and

(b) The prize represents a bona fide award for a suggestion which is the result of additional effort or ingenuity unrelated to and outside the scope of the usual and customary duties of any employee of the class eligible to participate and the prize is not used as a substitute for wages; and

(c) No employee is required or specifically urged to participate in the suggestion system plan or led to believe that he will not merit promotion or advancement (or retention of his existing job) unless he submits suggestions; and

(d) The invitation to employees to submit suggestions is general in nature and no specific assignment is outlined